United Nations A/68/899–S/2014/384

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
2 June 2014

Original: English

General Assembly
Sixty-eighth session
Agenda item 53
Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects

Security Council
Sixty-ninth year

Letter dated 1 June 2014 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to enclose herewith the concept note for the Security Council open debate on the theme "United Nations peacekeeping operations: new trends" to be held on 11 June 2014 under the presidency of the Russian Federation in the Security Council (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 53, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Vitaly **Churkin**

14-54450 (E) 040614 040614

Please recycle

Annex to the letter dated 1 June 2014 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Russian]

United Nations peacekeeping operations: new trends

Concept note

In its capacity as President of the Security Council, the Russian Federation will hold an open debate entitled "United Nations peacekeeping operations: new trends" on 11 June 2014. During this event, which will include the Security Council members, the broader United Nations membership, including troop- and police-contributing countries, and the United Nations Secretariat, a lively exchange of views is expected on one of the most pressing and relevant areas of the world organization's work. The Secretary-General of the United Nations will deliver an address.

The evolution in United Nations approaches to peacekeeping has been determined, above all, by the changing nature of the conflicts that the Organization must address. Today, unlike during the era of "classic" peacekeeping, the vast majority of crises in which United Nations peacekeeping operations are deployed or their mandates extended are non-international armed conflicts, often referred to as internal or intra-State conflicts (generally involving a confrontation between government forces and non-State armed groups). The causes of these conflicts and their complicating factors are many and varied, but generally speaking, they have one thing in common: the key to their settlement lies in national reconciliation. The sole exception would be cases where there are terrorist organizations and transnational armed groups present that may have an interest in the existence of a power vacuum at the national level and that have no concerns or interests inside the country where they are operating.

While peacekeeping operations are often deployed to resolve such intra-State conflicts, what is new is that now they often have no choice but to act in circumstances where there is little or no peace to keep and where peacekeepers may face non-traditional threats and heightened security risks. The conventional wisdom is that, in such circumstances, greater international engagement can, at the very least, provide a stabilizing impulse. Under these circumstances, there is a growing need to take into account the readiness of troop-contributing countries to take on such elevated risks. Moreover, it is frequently the case that the United Nations "blue helmets" are deployed alongside foreign military contingents already in the field (from either individual States or regional organizations), regional and international envoys, or special missions. This creates additional challenges, as well as opportunities for closer partnerships.

1. One of the milestones for United Nations peacekeeping along this path was the adoption in March 2013 of Security Council resolution 2098 (2013) extending the mandate of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and establishing within the Mission an Intervention Brigade authorized to use force preventively and to carry out targeted offensive operations. A short time later, the Security Council adopted resolution 2100 (2013) on the establishment of a peacekeeping operation in Mali. Considering

the specific threats present in that country, the Security Council authorized the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali to use all necessary means to carry out its mandate, including deterring threats and taking active steps to prevent the return of armed elements to key population centres. Earlier fairly common mandates stipulating the use of "all necessary means/actions" should also be taken into account. In some cases, peacekeepers used a greater degree of force; the actions of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire under Security Council resolution 1933 (2010) are an example of that.

These new circumstances of United Nations peacekeeping do not seem to be fully in line with, and in some cases may even run counter to, the fundamental principles of peacekeeping. It is clear that the problem should be appropriately reflected in peacekeeping instruments negotiated by Member States. In the meantime, we are dealing with a fragmented approach to trends that are gaining momentum.

The Organization, as embodied by the Secretariat and the Member States, with the troop-contributing countries playing a key role, will inevitably face the challenge of clearly and effectively formulating positions on a wide range of issues related to "robust" operations, assessment of their effectiveness and the impact on the image of the Organization. This applies, inter alia, to a well-defined rationale and a clear understanding of their purpose and actions (including such issues as "Whose side should we take?" and "How do we ensure strong efforts to promote national reconciliation?") When one of the parties to an internal conflict is the Government, overcoming the clash between the principle of host country consent and that of impartiality is very difficult, as the situations of a number of current missions have demonstrated. The definition of clear and timely stabilization strategies and military concepts, the scope of the use of force, effective leadership and command, and generating the necessary forces and assets, including proper training and logistical support for peacekeeping forces, are critical. There is also a need to reflect on the new challenges that will inevitably arise in the work of United Nations personnel, including humanitarian personnel, who are present in the field along with peacekeeping operations.

In these new conditions, the issue of security for peacekeepers becomes increasingly pressing, particularly in situations where threats to peacekeepers originate with non-State armed groups. A possible increase in casualties among peacekeepers through their direct participation in hostilities is also a source of serious concern (although current statistics show that casualties are mainly attributable to situations of self-defence). Member States and the United Nations Secretariat will need to have a serious discussion to clarify issues related to the loss of peacekeepers' special protected status under international humanitarian law and legal aspects of their responsibility for violation of that law.

Moreover, peacekeepers must have the necessary equipment, security perimeters, vehicles and other items that would enable them to operate safely. This could, however, lead to resource costs, which must be discussed in the relevant intergovernmental bodies.

2. The question of resources and the operational and technical strengthening of United Nations peacekeeping operations, including through the use of high-tech equipment, is also, to some extent, related to the new, "ambitious" mandates. All the more so as there is growing recognition that advanced technology (including

unarmed unmanned aerial vehicles and the latest in medical and engineering equipment) can contribute to the fuller implementation of mandates by peacekeepers and improved safety and security of personnel, as well as better situational awareness. Such positive elements were mentioned in the recent briefing by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in the Security Council.

However, despite an overall positive attitude to the idea of upgrading peacekeeping operations, discussion of specific new technologies, especially unarmed unmanned aerial vehicles, has pointed to a number of issues in the political, legal and budgetary areas. There are concerns on monitoring information received and ensuring its confidentiality. The practice of deploying unarmed unmanned aerial vehicles in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has also revealed problems related to timing and economic and operational effectiveness, as well as related human resources issues. In a letter addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2013/44), the President of the Security Council noted that in the United Nations Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo "external imagery/electronic equipment and associated analysis capabilities, notably surveillance capability such as that provided by unmanned aerial systems, may be used ... to enhance situational awareness, if available, on a case-by-case basis and without prejudice to the ongoing consideration by relevant United Nations bodies of legal, financial and technical implications of the use of unmanned aerial systems."

To date, such a discussion in the relevant intergovernmental bodies of the United Nations has been extremely fragmented in nature, but the time has come for the Organization to develop a balanced approach, including in the form of policy documents.

There is no doubt that all United Nations peacekeeping operations should have the necessary resources, including the tools and capabilities, to fulfil their mandates. One model that has seen intensive development recently is the temporary movement of personnel and equipment between missions to fill gaps in capacity, for example, when a situation deteriorates sharply. That mechanism has proven effective in a number of cases. However, inter-mission cooperation should not affect the quality of the delivery of each mission's mandates, the security of peacekeepers or the level of budgetary discipline. There is also the question of troop-contributing countries' willingness to deliver capacity and resources to carry out tasks in more difficult settings or in settings that are simply different.

3. Contemporary multi-component mission mandates have become more complex and include, in addition to the tasks of restoring security in the host countries, multiple peacebuilding tasks, up to and including the integrated restoration of statehood in the broadest sense of the word. Recent experience prompts us to ask whether the Organization is capable, from both the political and resource standpoints, of assuming the full range of tasks all at once, especially in cases where conflict is cyclical and characterized by periods of dramatic deterioration of the security situation. It appears that in some cases there is a need to set priorities in the mandates through the sequencing of tasks, so that when missions are overburdened there is no impact on their ability to maintain security and facilitate the political process and national reconciliation.

These points do not, of course, represent an exhaustive list of new trends in United Nations peacekeeping, but perhaps encompass those that are most pressing and that most strongly affect its qualitative transformation. The fragmented nature

of the inter-State policy and legal framework dictates the need to continue active discussions among Member States, the development of the relevant doctrines and, in the foreseeable future, the elaboration and adoption of policy instruments in the light of lessons learned.

There is no doubt that the central role in the formulation of such decisions by Member States and in providing guidance to the Secretariat on general peacekeeping issues falls to the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations of the General Assembly. Logistical, budgetary and staffing matters should be discussed in the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly. Productive discussion in those bodies is necessary for the Security Council to take informed decisions in developing the individual mandates of peacekeeping missions, taking into account the views of troop-contributing countries and the situation on the ground.

Inclusive interaction within the framework of the General Assembly and the Security Council will provide the Secretariat with the necessary guidance and strengthen the strategic partnership in United Nations peacekeeping, whose main virtues are its universal character and unique legitimacy.

The feasibility of developing a possible outcome document will be determined on the basis of the upcoming open debate.